

Adult Literacy Contact Centre NEWSLETTER

June 1991



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A project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C.

Governor General's Study Conference Tours B.C. Literacy Programs

Literacy was one of the themes of the third Governor General's Canadian Study Conference May 30 to June 16. This "travelling university" of Canadian "potential leaders" explored issues in 15 regions across Canada. Participants in the B.C. leg of the tour visited literacy programs at three locations in B.C.: King Edward Campus of Vancouver Community College, the City of Vancouver (Manitoba Works Yard), and Malaspina College in Nanaimo.

The aim of the Conference, held every four years, is to develop the knowledge and skills of Canadians in mid-career who are likely to have significant influence and responsibility in the country's future. Approximately 225 participants, chosen through a selection process from 650 nominations submitted by sponsoring organizations, come from business, labour, the public sector, community and voluntary service, academia and the arts.

The Conference is patterned after the Duke of Edinburgh Commonwealth Study Conference, an event which occurs every six years with Canada, Australia and Britain alternating as host countries. The first Canadian Study Conference,

under Governor General Edward Schreyer, was held in 1983 and the second in 1987 under Governor General Jeanne Sauve. The cost of organizing and operating the event is covered by donations and in-kind support from conference alumni, corporations, unions and labour organizations, foundations, governments and individuals. The conference is a registered not-for-profit organization.

Organized by a network of 2,000 volunteers across the country, the conference has no permanent organization or mandate to continue; it is regenerated every four years by the impetus of the alumni. Participants are expected to report on the communities they visit to the Governor General and other Conference members at the closing plenary session.

The theme of the 1991 conference was "Commitment and Leadership: Taking Responsibility in our National Community." Specific themes, chosen out of personal interest by Conference President the Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn, included literacy. The others were community service, the environment, and the needs of the aged.

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"Governor General" from page 1

The B.C. tour leader was Philippe Crevier, Marketing Manager at Bombardier Inc., Canadair Group, in Montreal. He led 14 participants, representing the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland on a tour which included Prince Rupert, the Queen Charlotte Islands, Nanaimo, Parksville, Whistler, Vancouver and New Westminster. The group heard about literacy issues from school board officials in Queen Charlotte City, literacy students in Nanaimo, learners, union and management representatives at the City of Vancouver's Municipal Workplace Language Program, and literacy students at King Edward Campus.

Crevier describes the tour as "very, very challenging" and says he established strong bonds with the other members of the B.C. group.

"We welcomed the opportunity to meet with different sectors of society," he says, "and to be put in touch with social issues and programs that were unfamiliar to us. Most of us gravitate in one world -- our jobs -- so it was enlightening to hear different perspectives."

After meeting millworkers, grain handlers and loggers in coastal B.C. communities, the group toured literacy programs on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland.

Lynn Hunter, Literacy Coordinator at Malaspina College, Nanaimo, says about six students from the literacy classroom took part in a dialogue with eight tour members during the June 6 visit to the college. Hunter says the group also visited Literacy Nanaimo's downtown centre, where they met with centre staff, took part in informal group discussions and paired up one-on-one with students. The session was "successful and very well-received, by both the students and visitors," she says. "The tour members were very open with us. Every single one of them asked questions."

At King Edward Campus on June 11, the tour members met in a breakfast meeting with Basic Education department literacy students and instructors, then attended class with the students. Both native English-speaking and English as a second language students were represented.

Mary Waddington, Basic Education department head, says the study group "was relaxed, informal, and came from a wide range of backgrounds. They seemed very interested to learn about literacy, and appreciated the opportunity to go into the classroom and meet with learners." She says "the college department felt if the purpose [of the tour] was to expose participants to new perspectives, then they should

OUR OTHER SERVICES

As well as producing this newsletter, the Adult Literacy Contact Centre has services for all B.C.:

we give information and encouragement by phone to adults who want to know about adult basic education opportunities in their own community;

we provide literacy information to the non-profit and community-based sector, business, labour, the media, all levels of government and the public at large; and

we refer volunteer tutors to adult literacy programs.

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talk to learners and instructors. If the goal was to raise awareness of literacy, then this was accomplished."

Each tour member was given a copy of the Provincial Literacy Advisory Committee (PLAC) report, *Opening the Doors to Lifelong Learning:*

Empowering Undereducated Adults. (The report, which recommends a comprehensive adult literacy strategy for B.C., was presented to the Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology in December, 1989.)

The study tours, which took place from June 2-12, wound up with a closing plenary session at Laval University in Quebec City June 13-16. □

Assessments Available to Learning Disabled

The Adult Learning Disabilities Association (ALDA) in Vancouver has implemented a program to provide community-based, affordable assessments for adults with specific learning disabilities. The program is one of B.C.'s 1990/91 literacy cost-shared projects between the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat.

According to ALDA, approximately 15 per cent of the population is mildly to severely learning disabled, but learning disabilities have only recently been identified as such. They can arise from genetic variations, biochemical factors, during the prenatal or perinatal period, or from other events that affect a person's learning style. A learning disabled person is an individual who has one or more significant deficits in the essential learning processes. The person is usually considered to have average or above average intelligence. However, for some reason, there is a gap between potential and achievement.

"Therefore," says Grace Piontkovsky, ALDA Executive Director, "an accurate

assessment is a crucial component in any program designed to provide remediation. It points out your strengths and weaknesses but the emphasis is on your strengths and how you can use them."

The assessments are to be administered by Dr. Peggy Koopman, a registered psychologist and a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia, who is currently on a year's sabbatical. The testing procedure will utilize two groups of tests: standard personality, aptitude and vocational interest tests; and selected psycho-educational tests.

Piontkovsky says that the program was initiated as a result of the number of calls ALDA receives from adults who are in need of an assessment but cannot afford the services of a psychologist in private practice. Such services are often inaccessible to the working poor, students and those on social assistance.

For further information on the ALDA assessment program, contact:

Grace Piontkovsky, Executive Director
Adult Learning Disabilities Association
1322 - 510 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1L8
Phone: 683-5554 ☐

Workplace Literacy in Prince Rupert

The city of Prince Rupert is a step closer to implementing literacy programs in the workplace following a series of planning meetings in the community which wound up this month.

"Partnerships at Work," the 1990-91 cost-shared project currently examining literacy initiatives in the workplace, conducted a forum called "Lifeskills, Literacy and Upgrading" at the Prince Rupert Public Library on June 14.

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The Adult Literacy Contact Centre is a project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology; and the National Literacy Secretariat.

The Centre welcomes receiving your literacy news by phone, fax or mail. We reserve the right to edit written submissions for the newsletter.

The newsletter is published monthly and distributed on the last working day of the month. It is available free of charge to any individual or agency upon request.



"Workplace" from page 3

The forum featured guest speakers, representing successfully completed workplace programs, in an information-sharing session with Prince Rupert job-training and government officials.

The forum was coordinated by Kathy Booth (a facilitator funded by Employment and Immigration Canada, Prince Rupert) and was chaired by local mediator Ian Harris.

Guest speakers were Gary Pharness, program consultant with the City of Vancouver Municipal Workplace Language Program; Sylvia Simpson, Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied Workers union; and Stephen Darling, General Manager of Vancouver's Pacific Palisades Hotel. The hotel recently completed a workplace language training program involving 23 employees (the subject of a "Partnerships" forum held in April, 1991).

"Partnerships" co-chair Shirley Abrams says the Prince Rupert steering committee, chaired by Booth, will continue to meet to work towards implementing a workplace program, although no sites have been confirmed as yet. □

ESL Instruction Subject of Report

A report commissioned for the B.C. Ministry of International Business and Immigration on the current state of English as a second language instruction in B.C. has just been published.

The report, called *Identification of Current Needs and Issues Related to the Delivery of Adult ESL Instruction in British Columbia*, is the result of a research project conducted by Dr. Alister Cumming, Department of Language Education, University of British Columbia. Cumming conducted the project for the Ministry in cooperation with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

The goals of the project were to:

- ❖ describe current ESL delivery in B.C.
- ❖ identify the need for services not met within existing resources
- ❖ identify the nature of services required to meet these needs

The project's conclusions are intended to help formulate provincial policy on the delivery of adult ESL instruction.

The study includes:

- ❖ demographic analyses of B.C.'s adult immigrant population (from 1980 to 1990)
- ❖ a descriptive survey of current adult ESL programs
- ❖ case studies of ten representative B.C. communities

The case studies, conducted by UBC graduate students, included interviews with ESL service providers and immigrants enrolled in programs. The results of the descriptive survey indicate that more than half of the 66 agencies surveyed perceive need for improvements in curriculum, equipment, resources, staffing, support services, financial aid, and teacher certification and professional development.

To obtain a copy of the report, contact:

Dr. Alister Cumming
The Ontario Institute for
Studies in Education (Toronto)
(416) 923-6641. □



Literacy 2000 Materials Now Available

The conference summary and tapes of proceedings from *Literacy 2000: Make the Next Ten Years Matter*, an international literacy forum held at Douglas College in New Westminster October 18 - 21, 1990, are now available from the Contact Centre.

The summary, a 200-page bound text, contains workshop descriptions and facilitators' notes, presentations at plenary sessions by keynote speakers and panelists, and papers written by conference presenters especially for the report. The text also includes a summary of the tracking process used at the conference, a section on conference evaluation and notes taken from response cards filled out by participants. The text was edited by Patty Bossort, Gillies Malnarich and Cathy Monnastes.

The 22 tapes, which cover the opening plenary session and conference workshops, are available on loan. The summary is available free of charge, while supplies last. The Centre also has available a selection of conference display material — student writing enlarged and mounted — which may be borrowed for use at literacy events. □

UBC Offers Summer Instructors' Course

The Department of Language Education at the University of British Columbia is offering a course for college and school district literacy instructors this summer. *Read 477: Teaching Adults to Read* is designed for teachers involved in teaching adult basic literacy and workforce literacy classes. According to the course outline, the purpose of the course is to "establish a rationale for teaching adults basic literacy strategies, both functional and workforce, and to identify effective teaching strategies."

Prerequisites for the course are a B.Ed, B.A., or B.Sc. degree. The course runs from July 22 - August 9, 1991.

For further information, contact the instructor, Dr. Florence Pieronek, at 822-5338 or 732-9745 (Vancouver). □

Personal Insights Into Literacy

A B.C. literacy study using the subjective method of research known as phenomenology has been published. *A Search for the Meaning of Becoming Literate: An Interpretive Inquiry* is by Lynn Hunter, a Literacy Coordinator at Malaspina College in Nanaimo. The research was undertaken both as Hunter's project for her Master of Education degree in Curriculum Studies from the Faculty of Education, University of Victoria (awarded in 1990); and as one of the 1989/90 cost-shared projects sponsored by the Ministry of Advanced Education Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat.

"The purpose of this project was to explore a deeper understanding of what it is like to become literate and to probe how that experience relates to the life of the educator," writes Hunter.

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THE LITERACY MATERIALS BULLETIN



The *Bulletin* is a 12-page review of instructional materials for adult basic education. Copies are available on request from the Contact Centre.

"Insights" from page 5

The study examines the personal stories of three of Hunter's literacy students -- given the pseudonyms, "Crystal," "Rod," and "Aaron"-- and of Hunter herself as their teacher. "Themes and stories were extracted from a variety of rich sources including students' journals, our conversations and transcripts of numerous

television, radio and newspaper stories featuring the students and, on occasion, me," she states.

The publication also contains the text of an address by Dr. Paul Gallagher (currently Project Director of the B.C. Human Resource Development Project) which was delivered to the literacy symposium,

Research on Literacy: Local and International Perspectives, at the University of British Columbia on October 5, 1990. The address was a response to Hunter's presentation of her report to the symposium. Copies of *A Search for the Meaning of Becoming Literate: An Interpretive Inquiry*, are available upon request from the Contact Centre. □



1990
INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR



Unesco Followup to International Literacy Year

In the countries in which International Literacy Year (ILY) had an impact, the success was based on national and local partnerships between governments and volunteer agencies with the support of the mass media, says a report by the Director General of Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

The report on the followup to ILY and the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand in March, 1990, was submitted by Federico Mayor to a meeting of the 51-member Unesco executive board at its Paris headquarters in May, 1991.

The report states that ILY and the WCEFA succeeded in placing literacy and basic education high on national and international agendas. (The WCEFA was an international conference jointly sponsored by Unesco, the United Nations Development Fund, UNICEF, and the World Bank.) The report notes that, "If ILY and WCEFA have one lesson to teach, it is unquestionably the power and promise of partnership."

In an effort to measure the effect of ILY on public awareness, the ILY secretariat carried out a survey of articles on literacy published in 130 major national and regional newspapers from 1988 to 1990. It was found that in 1988 the average newspaper carried less than one article on literacy (0.66) a year and in 1989, when the build-up to ILY began, there was an increase to 1.4 articles per paper. In 1990, there was an average of five major articles per paper.

The report concludes, "The problem is no longer mainly one of raising awareness. The time for action is at hand: action on a global scale extending over a decade or more."

Leslie Limage, Deputy Coordinator, ILY Secretariat of Unesco, Paris, says that "ILY was always seen as just a starting point for some longer term action. What's very satisfying is that [during ILY] countries have taken the initiative in developing long-term strategies in an extremely difficult economic period." □